AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph on page 25, lines 3 to 12, with the following paragraph:

FIG. 1B, showing the optical density (OD) of gelsolin in solutions containing varying amounts of LPS or LPA, demonstrates the interaction of LPS or PIP2 with intact gelsolin. Both LPS and PIP2 induced identical concentration-dependent fluorescence quenching of PBP10, indicating insertion of the peptide-bound rhodamine into a more hydrophobic environment. LPA also diminished the absorbance of gelsolin, but PS had no effect. LPS and PIP2 also caused congruent changes in the fluorescent spectrum of pyrene-QRLFQVKGRR (SEQ ID NO: 1) (Bucki et al, Biochemistry 40:15752-61 (2001)) in which binding to these lipids - but not to PS - induced clustering of the peptide with resulting excimer fluorescence of the pyrene group, manifest as a large increase in fluorescence emission at 480 nm (data not shown).

Please replace the paragraph on page 27, lines 19 to 26, with the following paragraph:

Since fluorescence measurements are strongly perturbed in plasma or serum, partitioning is examined of H-labeled-LPS to blood plasma lipoprotein fractions in gelsolin-depleted samples using anti-gelsolin coated ~~sepharose 2B~~ Sepharose® 2B beads as done previously by Janmey et al, 1987, supra, or in plasma of gelsolin-null mice after adding back various concentrations of gelsolin. Because the interactions of two other known plasma proteins: a soluble form of CD 14 receptor (sCD14) and plasma LBP (their plasma concentration is 2-6 μg/ml and 3-10 μg/ml respectively), may interfere with this assay, these proteins are also be removed by ~~sepharose 2B~~ Sepharose® 2B beads coated with their respective antibodies.

Please replace the paragraph on page 30, lines 10 to 14, with the following paragraph:

HAECs (primary human aortic endothelial cells) (ATCC, ~~Rockville, MD or Clonetics, San Diego, CA~~ 10801 University Boulevard, Manassas, VA 20110-2209), will grow to

confluence through passages 5-9 in endothelial cell growth medium supplemented with 2% fetal bovine serum, 10 μg/liter human recombinant epidermal growth factor, 1 mg/liter hydrocortisone, 50 μg/ml gentamicin, 50 ng/ml amphotericin-B, in a 37° C humidified atmosphere of 95% air:5% CO_2.

Please replace the paragraph on page 31, lines 22 to 29, with the following paragraph:

Protective effect of QRLFQVKGRR (SEQ ID NO: 1) on LPS-mediated alteration of platelet function –

To isolate human platelets, blood from healthy volunteers was collected in acid-citrate dextrose. Platelet-rich plasma obtained after centrifugation (15 minutes, 110 x g) at room 5 temperature, was supplemented with apyrase (0.5U/ml) (Sigma-Aldrich) to degrade excess nucleotides. Platelets were sedimented by centrifugation (10 minutes, 1000 x g), suspended in buffer A (139 mM NaCl, 2.8 mM KCl, 0.8mM $MgCl_2$, 0.8 mM KH_2PO_4, 8.9 mM $NaHCO_3$, 10 mM HEPES, 5.6 mM glucose, 0.3 % albumin, pH 7.35) and filtered on a 50 ml column of ~~Sepharose 3B~~ Sepharose® 3B to obtain gel-filtered platelets (GFP).